



Testimony of
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Education Committee
March 15, 2023

***HB 6881 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to Education Statutes Related to
Educator Compensation and Paraeducators***

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee. My name is Marisol Rodriguez and I have been a paraeducator in the Hartford School System for 27 years, working in collaboration with students, families and certified staff. I am testifying in support of HB 6881.

My job description has changed since I began as a paraeducator. I was asked to assist students with dressing, toileting, shoe tying and art activities. I was also expected to assist the certified teacher in making copies, preparing art activities, supervising students during outdoor play and at lunch time. Now the role of a paraeducator has been redefined and reimaged to add so much more to the roles we played before.

The job requirements for paraeducator when I first started was to have a high school diploma. We are now required to have an Associate's Degree in education to enter the profession. With the added demands to our profession, we are not being compensated for the work we do. We monitor, educate, make reports about progress, and have to do as asked by administration and ensure we are meeting parent expectations and student needs on a daily basis. These demands have left me feeling overwhelmed and feeling unappreciated.

This profession, while honorable and necessary for the future of our students, is undervalued in terms of compensation. It also lacks the necessary programs to be able to move onto becoming a certified teacher so that we can earn a living wage. We also have to bear the cost of expensive, high deductible health insurance! How are we expected to maintain a home, rent, car, insurance, everyday bills and now add on the added cost of health insurance that is NOT what we need and with NO relief of

compensation on the other end of things! I am literally afraid that I am one small paycheck away or one illness away from losing all that I have worked for!

I am telling my story so that it may help provide a snippet of the work that I do daily. I do it with love for the students I serve. I understand that paraeducators are the glue that holds the schools together and we are a bridge that helps students and families be successful in their educational journeys. I ask that you have compassion for the profession of paraeducators and find the resources for us to have a living wage and health insurance that meet our needs and those of our families while we put our all into the educational needs of our students!

Please pass HB 6881. It will help those who are currently in the profession to be able to make a living wage so that the profession is more sought after by others who want to come join us in this honorable field of work! Thank you.